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ABSTRACT

The lifelong learning movement is part of an attempt to change the social order, particularly since its ultimate purpose--the creation of a learning society--implies a total restructuring of the relationship between society and education. The concept of lifelong learning is not new--it finds a strong model in ancient Greek society--but its extension to all levels of society, rather than just the elite, is new. Lifelong learning has emerged as an organizing principle of the worldwide movement from an industrial to a "transindustrial" society, from emphasis on material goods to emphasis on development of the person. Lifelong learning is seen as a movement away from the idea of "terminal education," which is "pumped into" students up to age eighteen. In lifelong learning the emphasis is on the learner, rather than the teacher. Trend analysis by sociologists and futurologists shows that there have been only about three great transformations in the history of the human race. A fourth transformation, to the age of the transindustrial society, is under way now. Evidence for this change can be found by an analysis of the contents of major city daily newspapers, as well as in scholarly writings, and the advent of the United States as a knowledge, rather than an industrial, society (witness the number of knowledge workers today as compared to 30 years ago). The challenge for adult educators is to reflect on what this social transformation might mean for each one's particular program area and institution. (KC)

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LIFELONG LEARNING AS A WORLDWIDE MOVEMENT REFLECTING AND CONTRIBUTING TO SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

Marcie Boucouvalas

Paper presented at the Third Annual
Lifelong Learning Research Conference
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LIFELONG LEARNING AS A WORLDWIDE MOVEMENT REFLECTING AND CONTRIBUTING TO SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

Marcie Boucouvalas[1]

Introduction

As evidenced by the diversity of topics and papers presented at this conference, lifelong learning is one of those comprehensive concepts with wide applicability. Perhaps that's because essentially, lifelong learning may be viewed as a philosophy which espouses the belief that continuous inquiry is an essential condition of living for both individual and societal self-renewal and growth. This premise seems to be the common thread which provides a unifying base for our convening here at the Lifelong Learning Research Conference.

In its most comprehensive operational usage, however, lifelong learning refers to a worldwide movement. As defined by Wilson (1974, p. 4) a movement (that is, a social movement) refers to a "conscious, collective organized attempt to bring about change in the social order." In this sense the lifelong learning movement is just such an attempt to change the social order, particularly since its ultimate purpose -- the creation of a learning society -- implies a total restructuring of the relationship between society and education. A learning society is one in which education is interwoven with the social, political, and economic fabric such that education is not a system in itself; rather, it is a responsibility of the entire society. Essentially, self-direct-

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ing, lifelong learners would have available to them throughout their lives a gamut of learning opportunities and an educative environment. The change aimed for, then, is more than a quantitative one; that is, it is not restricted to merely increasing the number of learning opportunities. It is primarily a qualitative change in the nature and mode of learning and in the relationship between society and education.

Old Roots, New Thrust

The idea of learning as a lifelong process, however, is not new; it dates, in fact, to antiquity. Even the notion of a learning society finds a strong model in the ancient Greek concept of Paideia, in which the entire society formed an educational matrix geared to the learning of its citizens.

Beliefs and practices in those days, however, were restricted to the elite of society. The current movement, on the contrary, stresses lifelong learning for all. A basic element in the ideology, therefore, is democratization of education.

Lifelong education, as a result, has emerged as an organizing principle. Movement is encouraged from the system of "terminal education" to lifelong education "not [as] an educational system, but [as] the principle upon which the overall organization of a system is based and which should ... underlie the development of each of its component parts" (Faure, 1972, p. 182). "Terminal education," as the word implies refers to a view which regards education as something one possesses, like a degree, a credential, etc. Such views are reflected in expressions such as "terminal degree," "finish your education," and others.

Under such a thrust, learning (not teaching) becomes central--thus the name lifelong learning rather than lifelong education movement. With such an emphasis on learning, both the process and product of education are transformed, as depicted in Table 1, page 3.

TABLE 1

Comparative List of Characteristics of Education Under Present "Terminal System" versus under Lifelong Education [a]

Present System "Terminal Education"	System Based on Principle of Lifelong Education
Concentrates primarily on one period of life known as youth	Covers the entire life-span
Concentrates on transmission of knowledge with primary emphasis on intellectual development	Fosters development of inquiry skills and self-direction with emphasis on the total person in intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual areas and integration among them. Also recognizes a continuum of learning needs from basic survival to more transpersonal.
Definition and source of knowledge narrow in scope; logic emphasized	Recognizes and is based on a view of many sources of knowledge, including the intuitive mode
Based on premise that education is a means by which cultural heritage is handed down	Based on expanded premise that education is a means of development
Emphasizes possession (degree, certificate, credential)	Empahsizes being-stresses both individual and societal self-renewal
Segments learning into subject-centered approach	Attempts to make learning more life-centered and problem-centered and emphasizes integration among subject areas
Serves as a means of directing individuals into career choices both by educational institution and employers and, as a result, enhances only a selected segment of an individual's skills	Frowns upon developing only a specific component of individual's ability and seeks to draw out and develop individual's entire potential as a full being
Embraces linear life pattern model of school (in youth) work (in adulthood) leisure (in old age)	Extends education to cover all of life's roles and goals and seeks integration among learning, work, and leisure
Views Education as provided by only one section of society - educational institutions	Views Education as provided by whole of society in different contexts and at different times

[a] Based on information presented at the UNESCO Interdisciplinary Symposium on Lifelong Education, Paris, September 25 - October 2, 1972.

An Idea Whose Time Has Come

So, although the idea of lifelong learning is old, the notion of extending opportunities to the mass populace is new. New also is the emergence for the first time in history of an organized, collective worldwide movement to support and facilitate operational progression. In fact, the intensity and popularity of the present movement toward lifelong learning is emerging with time-appropriateness in response to two equally powerful contributing forces: (a) Social Conditions (b) Research findings.

Social Conditions. Social conditions generally give rise to social movements. Accordingly, a number of pressing social forces are producing a rapidly changing society and have given rise to the necessity for and acceptance of lifelong learning on a worldwide basis, specifically: (a) Boundless proliferation of knowledge, (b) Creation (via satellite and the like) of global worldwide communication networks, (c) Growth of nonwork or leisure time, (d) High life expectancy, (e) Breakdown in traditions, (f) Mobile society. Learning to adapt to and grow from change, as a result, becomes an essential quality of living. On the heels of these social conditions, research findings are contributing vital support to the credibility and development of the movement.

Research findings. The whole advent of life-span developmental psychology has promoted the idea that adults continue to develop throughout life. It seems that those who have developed healthy "learning" skills will be better able to grow from change.

Moreover, research is currently discrediting many previously held assumptions about learning. For instance, notions such as the following are being discarded (McClusky, 1974): (a) Childhood and youth are the best time for learning, with the corollary belief that adulthood is the time for working not learning, (b) Children must be taught that which they will need to know when adult, and the corollary belief that one can learn enough in sixteen to

eighteen years to last a lifetime, (c) School teaching and learning take primacy in the learning process.

At the same time, the research of Tough (1971, 1978) has shown us that a vast number of adults engage in self-initiated, independent learning projects, and that learners tend to proceed through several phases in the process of "natural learning." This research, of course, sheds light on how we might assist these learners who, as the lifelong learning movement proliferates, will form the very core of our population. THESE, THEN, ARE THE REASONS WHY WE HEAR THE RALLY OF CRIES THAT DECLARE: LIFELONG LEARNING IS AN IDEA WHOSE TIME HAS COME.

Against this backdrop, UNESCO has acted as a catlyst to the movement, particularly since 1972 when the UNESCO-appointed International Commission on the Development of Education published their report Learning To Be (Faure et al., 1972), in which lifelong learning was recommended and adopted as a master concept for both developed and developing nations in the years to come. A sizeable effort has been directed to the revision of school curricula and evaluation, as well as teacher training, in light of the concept. Additionally, the development of a number of monographs, publications, and symposia around the lifelong learning theme has been a top priority with UNESCO over the past decade. The influence of such efforts has resulted in the development of policy, projects, programs, and practices around the lifelong learning theme in a myriad of countries worldwide. In fact, a number of countries are reorganizing their educational systems around lifelong learning as a master concept. In the United States, however, operationalization of the concept stresses the adult years. Although overshadowing the totality of the thrust, it is an important first step in preparing an effective cadre of parents, policymakers, professionals, practitioners, and citizens.

Part of a Larger Progression

Now, movements don't happen in a vacuum. Let's recall the definition of a movement as a "conscious, collective, organized attempt to bring about change in the social order." This goal of changing the social order varies in aim and scope among movements. Some are aimed at changing only an element of society, while others are aimed at a change so profound so as to not only alter one element, but to restructure the entire social order. A restructuring process is notably a mighty different task than a mere rearrangement of elements within the social order. Movements aimed at restructuring society aim at social transformation.

During transformational times, particularly, members and adherents of a movement may not even realize how the movement they support is reflecting a greater thrust in society-at-large, and how it has the potential to contribute to a smooth transformation of the social order through which society is attempting to progress. Such may be the case with lifelong learning proponents and enthusiasts. Many may be unaware of the magnitude and cruciality of the movement in which we are partaking. In order to get a better understanding of the magnitude and rarity of this event, then, let's first engage in a quick overview of our past transformations.

Overview of Past Transformations

Social transformation is indeed an event of awesome magnitude, particularly when one reflects on the analysis of Lewis Mumford (1956), which revealed that only about a half dozen such transformations have occurred in the history of humankind. An analysis of works by both Mumford (1956) and Bronowski (1973) enables us to sketch a transformational perspective on our evolutionary progression (See Table 2, p. 7), which seems to have entailed a biological evolution, a cultural evolution, and now what is predicted as an evolution of consciousness.

Table 2.

Major Transformations of Humankind from Primitive to Present

	Approximate Onset of Period (# of years ago)	Transformation	Approximate Duration	Major Advances and New World View
BIOLOGICAL EVOLUTION	1 million	PRIMITIVE MAN (Animal → Human	970,000 years	Homo Erectus - humans walk upright Homo Sapiens - leave a legacy of knowledge Development of language (sound to meaning) Use of fire Invention of stone tools ABILITY TO CHANGE AND CONTROL, RATHER THAN MERELY RESPOND AND ADAPT TO ENVIRONMENT
	30,000	ARCHAIC HUMAN (Stationary → Nomad)	18,000 years	Follow natural migration of wild herds, rather than stalk single animal Development of more refined tools (e.g. harpoon, spear, etc.) ABILITY TO LEAVE THE ENVIRONMENT: EMANCIPATE ONESELF AND MIGRATE
	12,000	TRIBAL VILLAGER (Nomad → Village Agriculture)	5,000 years	Agricultural Revolution Domestication of plant and animal Beginning of settled communities From hunters and gatherers to farmers ABILITY TO COOPERATE WITH NATURE AND CYCLES; BEGINNING OF SOCIAL ORGANIZATION AND GROUP LIFE
CULTURAL EVOLUTION	7,000	CIVILIZATION (Tribal → Civilized Culture)	4,400 years	Organization of the city and accompanying development of architecture, art, etc. Change from memoria (life) to mercantile (money) economy Development of two classes: ruler and ruled End of Stone Age with the discovery of how to extract metal from ore and resulting use of metal as tools, weapons, etc. DEEMPHASIS ON BIOLOGICAL SURVIVAL AND SHIFT OF CONCERN TO SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT
	*2,600	AXIAL HUMAN (Outer → Inner World)	2,200 years	Spiritual nature of humankind stressed; concentration on "soul" alone emphasized; other aspects of being human ignored Bodily activities repressed to reach goal of purification from animal nature Church came into prominence SHIFT TO WORLD DOMINATED BY RELIGION AND PRIMACY OF SPIRITUAL NATURE
	400*	MECHANICAL HUMAN (Inner → Outer)	400 years	Copernican Revolution (1500's) Industrial Revolution (1700's) Emphasis on outer world and mechanical/material/technological progress substituted for human development Change from village industry to centralized industry SHIFT TO WORLD DIRECTED PRIMARILY BY INTELLIGENCE AND THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD
EVOLUTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS	Present	NEW TRANSFORMATION IN PROCESS (Synthesis of Inner and Outer)		Emphasis on integrated development of sensory (outer) as well as non-sensory (inner) aspects of humankind Integration and synthesis of Eastern and Western world views and definitions of reality Shifting paradigm (scientific/religious view of world) SHIFT FROM INDUSTRIAL TO LEARNING SOCIETY AND PLANETARY/WORLD CULTURE

Our biological evolution seems to have incorporated about two to three transformations.

1. Our emergence into primitive human with the development of language, our discovery and the use of fire, and our invention of stone tools was signaled by Homo Erectus who walked upright, and Homo Sapiens who started to leave a legacy of knowledge for future generations.

2. Our movement from primitive to archaic human resulted in a nomad no longer stationary, no longer dependent on the immediate environment, and no longer totally susceptable to its adverse effects. A nomad was one who followed the migration of wild herds (rather than stalking single animals for survival). Of course, the development of more refined tools likewise followed. Both these transformations represent humankind's stature as a hunting and fishing society.

3. From life as a nomad, humankind then settled down into tribal villages, a shift which was precipitated by the agricultural revolution. This transformation triggered likewise the onset of our cultural evolution with the beginning of social organization and group life.

Cultural evolution seems, likewise, to have progressed through about three more transformations.

1. The progression from a tribal existence to a civilized culture, marked by the organization of the city and the change from a manorial or life economy to a mercantile of money economy.

2. The advent of axial human with a rise in the prominence of the church precipitated a shift to a world dominated by religion.

3. The advent of the current scientific world view, accompanied by technological and mechanical progress, and a concomitant emphasis on material values, was brought on by the Copernican and Industrial Revolutions.

Each transformation has entailed a major shift in attitudes, values, and

belief systems. Each has catapulted humankind to a new world view and a new image of humankind. It is important to realize, however, that each transformation left vestiges of humankind living at previous levels. Not all people abandoned their prior mode of living to progress onward. So, the "family of man" still hosts a gamut of levels from the tribal existences of the Bushmen of Africa through the third world countries, on up to the industrialized nations which now seem on the brink of a new evolutionary progression.

Our current transformational times are hosting a shift from the Industrial Society, which has occupied the limelight for the past century, to what many writers refer to as a Post-Industrial Society. I prefer to use the terminology Trans-Industrial, coined by Willis Harman of Stanford University, however, since it seems to better connote the transformative character of going above and beyond industrial society. In this regard, the concept is different from that of post-industrial society, which merely means occurring after and, therefore, does not necessarily presume a transformation of the social order.

Taking a look at a comparison of selected societal features under an industrial verus under a trans-industrial society (see Table 3, p. 10), we find a striking parallel between the features of transindustrial society and the features of a learning society, advocated by lifelong learning movements proponents: These features are very akin, likewise, to the assertions of the Club of Rome report (Botkin et al., 1979) that learning and the individual human being (rather than material resources) are the key to the word's future.

Human growth, knowledge, learning, and information all seem to be common foci of the talked-about transformation, whether from future researchers and social analysts like Willis Harman, or from a myriad of other sources discussed below.

In fact, by 1950 the more visionary scholars and writers were starting to recognize this forthcoming shift. In 1956, Lewis Mumford (cultural philosopher

Table 3

Selected Features of Society Under the Current Industrial Paradigm Versus Under a Transindustrial Paradigm[a]

Industrial	Transindustrial
Emphasis on economic and material growth	Emphasis on human growth and development
Concerned with physical frontiers of geography and technology	Concern shifts to inner frontiers of mind and spirit
People serve institutions	Institutions serve people
Learning viewed as an activity of limited duration in preparation for real "business" of fitting into institutions of industrialized state	Learning a prime concern of all phases of life and all social institutions

[a] Based on information presented by Willis Harman in An Incomplete Guide to the Future. San Francisco: San Francisco Book Company, 1976.

and sociologist) predicted that transformation of the industrial society would increase the amount of leisure time available and that humankind would become increasingly concerned with improving the quality of life. Education and learning, he further predicted, would come to the forefront such that "education will constitute the principal business of life" (p. 241). Moreover, he asserted that "this change promises to be so profound that one must emphasize it by bestowing on it a new name to indicate that the process of infu..ing values and meaning into every phase of life will not stop with the formal school" (pp. 241-242). Here we are twenty-five years later and a new name has evolved for this process in the lifelong learning movement.

By the mid-sixties humanistic scientist J. R. Platt (1966) was beginning to voice his view that "we may now be in the time of the most rapid change in the whole evolution of the human race, either in the past or to come," (p. 196) -- a phenomenon which he termed a "cultural shock-front" (after the aerodynamic notion of shock-front in which a sonic boom is caused by an airplane when the leading edge of the wing travels faster than the speed of sound.) He contended that the farm and city ways of life were being rapidly transformed into a "high-technology world society." Predicated on both the notions of leisure and necessity, he proposed that education may become an activity for everyone. "Continuing education for much of the population," he asserted, "may become a lifelong activity" (p. 199).

Here we are now "At the Edge of History," as cultural historian W. H. Thompson (1971) puts it, where the very strength of our industrial technological civilization has now become our weakness. Willis Harman, (1977, p. 9) of Stanford echoes a similar sentiment:

> The basic system goals that have dominated the industrial era (material progress, individualism, freedom of enterprise, few restraints on capital accumulation, social responsibility mainly the concern of government rather than other institutions, etc.) and that have been approached through a set of fundamental subgoals (efficiency, productivity, continued growth of production, consumption, and technological and manipulative power), have resulted in processes and states (division of labor, specialization, cybernation, stimulated consumption, planned obsolescence, private exploitation of resources held in common), which end up counteracting human ends (enriching work roles, resource conservation, environmental enhancement, equitable sharing of the world's resources). The result is a massive and growing challenge to the legitimacy of the basic goals and institutions of the present industrial system.

Now, lifelong learning is not alone in this process. Modern physics, psychology, health care, and a host of other catalytic areas sport movements which note and nudge this ongoing transformation. In fact, sweeping changes

seem to be cutting across many disciplines, changes which are so profound in scope so as to generate a new world view and new image of humankind, comparable in scope to the shift which occurred when we moved from an agricultural to an industrial society. An entire paradigm shift, as popularized by Kuhn (1962, 1970) is upon us, a shift, that is, in our pattern of perceiving, valuing, and acting. A new world view and image of humankind is ascending,--new and more total in that the previous world view, or paradigm, is seen as impcomplete rather than incorrect.

Wholeness and totality permeate this emerging paradigm, distinctive features of which include the following characteristics. Self/help/self-reliance and stress on the autonomous individual in a decentralized society reflect the effect of shifting from an emphasis on external control over the individual to a state of internal control or self-regulation. Flexibility, likewise, appears to be a integral characteristic. Simultaneously, however, a thrust toward interconnectedness is manifest. Integration both within the individual as well as society is stressed. Likewise, interdependence among individuals, societies, and nations is emphasized in an effort to develop a planetary perspective. These, then, are the characteristic features of the new paradigm surfacing across many fields in order to attend to the problems caused by such an overemphasis on a mechanical, segmented, compartmentalized, linear world view precipitated by the industrial society. This shift aims at synthesizing "inner" and "outer" worlds and may be seen as an evolution of consciousness, complementing our past biological and cultural evolutions.

Much, of course, has been catalyzed by the findings of modern physics and quantum mechanics, which have uncovered that at the subatomic level there are no proverbial building blocks; everything is interconnected and in a

constant state of fluidity and flux, a state of unbroken wholeness. The new paradigm, then, transcends the Newtonian mechanistic world view and sees it as only part of the total picture.

Lifelong Learning and Social Transformation

The lifelong learning movement reflects and contributes to this paradigm shift in a number of ways. First of all, relevant to self-regulation and self-reliance, increasing emphasis is placed upon helping learners take more responsibility for their own learning in moving from an exclusively teacher-directed to a more self-directed mode of inquiry. Stress is likewise placed on "learning how to learn" skills in an effort to increase self-reliance.

The simultaneous thrust toward interconnectedness is likewise apparent in the lifelong learning movement. The notion of inter-learning, or sharing with others and seeking others as resources for learning, as well as the emphasis upon mutual exploration endeavors by learners and learning facilitators are important components of the movement.

On a societal level, the development of a learning society entails the acknowledgment of an interdependent relationship among various agents of learning which co-exist within a community. Collaboration, coordination, and cooperation are not only encourage, but deemed necessary to the fruition of a learning society.

Interdependence in terms of a global identity and the "One World Man" perspective is likewise an important part of the lifelong learning movement. Relevant to the international scene, a global learning community, in fact, is sought. UNESCO, a prime force in fostering international intellectual cooperation, has contributed an initial impetus in this direction with the establishment of the United Nations University in 1973[2].

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[2]The United Nations University is not a traditionally conceived degree granting university, but a "worldwide network of advanced study institutes devoted to research, postgraduate training, and dissemination of knowledge" for "achieving international intellectual cooperation."

Likewise, the various international exchange of scholars programs are helping to build a united worldwide learning community. Further, acceptance of life-long learning as a global master concept and the reorganization of educational systems in a myriad of countries worldwide around this concept, is an encouraging sign. Of course, interdependence used in the above contexts does not mean to imply that one is dependent upon the other, but that both can learn from each other and, as a unit, are capable of creating an effect of which each alone is individually incapable.

Relevant to flexibility, the lifelong learning movement displays it in structure, content, definition, and operation of learning opportunities. Many agents of learning are recognized as co-existing within society or a community. Nonschool, as well as school, organizations are recognized. The notion of flexibility is also manifested in the diversity of formats delineated, from the structured, planned approaches to the more incidental types of learning. Further, not only are all spheres of learning (i.e. intellectual, physiological, emotional. spiritual) included, but the movement recognizes and is based on the view of many sources of knowledge.

Additionally, the lifelong learning movement emphasizes integration among the different spheres of being, suggesting that the integrated development of the individual is a major focus of the movement. Moreover, an integrated effort of all societal institutions and organizations is encouraged in order to effectuate a learning society. Perhaps the most vital concern, however, is the integration of learning, work, and leisure throughout one's lifetime. Under lifelong learning all may be pursued cyclically or even simultaneously.

Past predictions and current analyses, then, join together in demonstrating how the current movement toward lifelong learning is reflective of a larger progression toward social transformation. From the grass-roots level, moreover, we find additional corroboration.

Trend analysts John Naisbitt, Jeff Hallett, and associates have, since 1974, been engaged in a systematic, large-scale content analysis of over 200 newspapers across the United States. The results indicate about five major trends that are transforming the United States. These trends, interestingly, validate many of the previously noted observations relevant to an ongoing paradigm shift, trends--for instance--toward wholism, interdependence, interrelatedness, and others. (Naisbitt, Hallett, et al., 1980)

1. The United States is rapidly shifting from a mass industrial society to an information society. In fact, citing data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, they reveal the following shifts:

Percentage of work force
in industrial versus information sector in 1950 and 1980

	Industrial Sector	Information Sector
1950	65%	17%
1980	30%	50%

They predict that the final impact will be more profound than the 19th century shift from agriculture to industry. For lifelong learning professionals this trend is pivotal. What role will lifelong learning professionals (especially those dealing with the adult years) play in nurturing the development of a learning society? Might we instead fall prey to the possibility of winding up with a training society, a concern voiced by Ohliger (1974, 1975) and Ziegler (1977), and others?

2. More decentralization than centralization is taking place in America for the first time in history. The power is shifting not only from the President to Congress but, less noticed, from Congress to the states and locations.

3. We are now a truly global economy because of instantaneously shared information, and the world is deeply in the process of a redistribution of labor and production.

4. American society is moving in two direction at once--"high tech" [technology] and "high touch." The introduction of every new technology has a compensatory human response.

5. A job revolution is beginning in America, a basic restructuring of the work environment from top-down to bottom-up.

Workers seem to be insisting on human satisfaction from their work, no longer satisfied merely with more pay, fewer hours, and fringe benefits. Their prediction that a whole new attitude toward the worker is on the way is consistent with the prediction of Willis Harman that as we move from an industrial to a transindustrial society, concern would shift from a stance of people serving institutions to one of institutions serving people, from an emphasis on economic and material growth to an emphasis on human growth and development.

Extremely noteworthy is the fact that Naisbett, Ballett, and associates derived these trends totally from an analysis of newspapers, independent of, and without the prior knowledge of, the literature discussed above. Based on a recent visit to--and interview with--these trend analysts, participants in my doctoral seminar on current issues are in the process of examining these trends in depth and exploring the implications they might have for lifelong learning professionals, especially those working with the adult years. Perhaps we might even have a document to share with you in the future.

Of course, this shift through which we are living, you'll probably hear called many things. Novelist Alvin Toffler (1980) calls it the Third Wave: Theordore Roszak (1978) refers to it as The Creative Disintegration of Industrial Society, while Marilyn Ferguson (1980) has dubbed it The Aquarian Conspiracy. Humanistic scientist J. R. Platt (1966, 1971, 1974) predicted it would become The Step to Man. Economist Kenneth Boulding (1964) saw the entire meaning of the twentieth century as a "great transition" which would transport us from a civilized to a postcivilized society, while cultural historian

William Irwin Thompson (1971, 1974, 1976, 1978) implores us to make it a shift from civilization to planetization. You might keep in mind the common thread of social transformation which is permeating and pervading our very beings.

Implications for Lifelong Learning Professionals

Lifelong learning professionals, then, particularly those working with the adult years, are beset with a beckoning challenge. After all, it is adults be they policymakers, professionals or practitioners of any capacity, or even parents, that will "make it fly." As indicated by Margaret Mead (1974), perhaps the most significant feature of our current times is that for the first time in history we know that we're in a transformation period. What this means is that we may have the power to shape that outcome and perhaps even the capacity to recognize the counter forces which may act against such a transition.

Transformational times are not easy times. In fact, they are notoriously tumultuous and turbulent, people and institutions alike wanting to hold on to the security of the old order. The role adult educators play in this process will be vital; the action they take will be critical. In transformational times such as these adult education has an increasingly important responsibility to keep abreast of and ahead, and do its part in effectuating a smooth transformation, free from resistance based especially on ignorance or lack of knowledge regarding the importance of the ongoing shift. Let us heed the warning of Willis Harman: (1978, p. 22)

> If we fail to understand that modern industrial society is indeed pregnant with the new social order and mistake the creative forces for threats to our well-being, we could end up with the birth process being far more disruptive than need be—perhaps even with a miscarriage

Harman further stresses that we cannot afford to ignore of neglect the powerful institutional forces which could be instrumental in aborting any effort at transformation. Now, adult educators cut across a broad spectrum of societal

institutions, organizations, and agencies and might, in a variety of capacities, play, first of all, an information-giving role. Perhaps a group with the heaviest responsibility will be the HRD (Human Resource Development) Professionals who work with both organizations and staff development in a myriad of institutions and agencies. Most directly and continually in touch with management, they offer a vital avenue for educating those in decision-making capacities, as well as others, as to the necessity of such a shift for their own survival and growth, as well as that of society. Moreover, the mass media, the public, politicians and, of course, all educators should be included in this "learning group." In fact, these responsibilities are in tune with several of the functions, which, according to Lowe (1975), adult education should perform for society; for instance,--helping societies adjust to the effects of social changes, rapid pace, and complexity; awakening civic spirit and sense of social commitment, and others. I invite you to think with me not only today, but over the tomorrows, the weeks, the months, as to how adult educators might contribute to a smooth transformation of the social order, of what implications the lifelong learning movement that is reflecting this rare event of a social transformation might have for your particular context, for your program area, for your institutions, and how or what part you can contribute individually and we might play collectively. The challenge beckons. The choice is ours!

As Marilyn Ferguson (1980, p. 280) puts it, "the poignant human paradox [is] a plastic brain capable of endless self-transcendence, equally capable of being trained into self-limiting behavior."

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